

HB 5438, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A DEBT-FREE STATE COLLEGE PROGRAM FOR EMPLOYEES OF DAY CARE FACILITIES, HOME HEALTH CARE AGENCIES AND NURSING HOMES.

Senator Slapp, Representative Haddad, Senator Kelly, Representative Haines, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.B. 5438, An Act Establishing a Debt-Free State College Program for Employees of Day Care Facilities, Home Health Care Agencies, and Nursing Homes. My name is Annabel Molina, and I am employed as a childcare teacher at the Southington YMCA.

I support this legislation because *as a childcare worker currently enrolled in college, I know how overwhelming it is to think about how I am going to pay back my student loans after graduating. Working in childcare is a very rewarding but difficult job, especially with the financial stresses attached to the salary of a profession in childcare. It is important that the children of Connecticut get the best childcare they can, and I believe passing this bill would benefit this field greatly.* The number of childcare workers in Connecticut dropped 28% from 2019 to 2021 compared with the previous three years, from nearly 9,200 workers to about 6,600, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. It is my hope this legislation would attract more quality teachers into the early childcare field.

I believe this legislation will help with the current childcare shortage our state is facing but also increase the quality of childcare staff that help so many of Connecticut's children.